# Saint Paul Planning Commission Central Corridor Resource Center 1080 University Avenue West

# **Minutes July 11, 2008**

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, July 11, 2008, at 8:30 a.m. at the Central Corridor Resource Center, 1080 University Avenue W.

**Commissioners** Mmes. Donnelly-Cohen, Faricy, Lu, Morton; Smitten, Wencl; and

**Present:** Messrs. Alton, Barrera, Bellus, Commers, Gordon, Johnson, Kramer, Margulies,

Nelson, Rosemark, Spaulding, and Ward.

Commissioners

Absent:

Ms. \*Porter, and Mr. \*Goodlow.

\*Excused

**Also Present:** Larry Soderholm, Planning Administrator; Tom Beach, Department of Safety

and Inspections, Patricia James, Lucy Thompson, Donna Drummond, Allen Lovejoy, Margot Fehrenbacher, Joan Trulsen, Jessica Rosenfeld, Fredrique Siegel, Emily Goodman, Shelley Miller, and Sonja Butler, Department of

Planning and Economic Development staff.

### I. Approval of minutes June 27, 2008.

MOTION: Commissioner Wencl moved approval of the minutes of June 27, 2008. Commissioner Donnelly-Cohen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

### II. Chair's Announcements

Chair Alton announced that Commissioner Bob Cudahy has resigned, due to family and professional conflicts. We are sorry to see him leave the Commission and we wish him well.

### III. Planning Administrator's Announcements

Larry Soderholm reported on planning-related business at the City Council for last week and their agenda for next week.

IV. PUBLIC HEARING: Central Corridor Station Area Plans: Snelling, Fairview, Raymond and Westgate. Item from the Neighborhood Planning Committee.

(Donna Drummond, 651/266-6556)

Chair Alton announced that today the City of Saint Paul Planning Commission is holding a public hearing on the Central Corridor Station Area Plans for Snelling, Fairview, Raymond, and Westgate. Comments will also be accepted on the Introduction Chapter and the Implementation Chapter. Notice of the public hearing was mailed to the Early Notification System list and all

property owners within the station areas.

Donna Drummond, PED, presented an overview of the four western station area plans: Snelling, Fairview, Raymond, and Westgate. Ms. Drummond explained how the plans are organized, the planning process, the key issues addressed in each plan, and overarching principles that guide the plans. The plans provide direction for both private and public investment along the corridor. Ms. Drummond said that the plans represent an overall vision as to the desired locations for green space, higher-density development, improvements to bike and pedestrian pathways, and public art. She explained the respective roles of the City and Metropolitan Council in the Central Corridor LRT project. The City has been working very closely with the Met Council on preliminary engineering, and will continue to do so throughout final engineering and design. More information on the LRT project is available at <a href="https://www.centralcorridor.org">www.centralcorridor.org</a> and on the City's web site at <a href="https://www.stpaul.gov/centralcorridor">www.stpaul.gov/centralcorridor</a>.

Chair Alton read the rules of procedure for the public hearing.

The following people spoke on the **Snelling** Station:

- 1. Theresa Heiland, representing Union Park Council/District 13, 1570 Concordia Avenue. Ms. Heiland said that they appreciate the creative thinking and open, participatory process that went into the planning, and consider the result a healthy blend of many different perspectives. They are pleased that the plans represent suggested goals for development, not specific prescriptions, and that implementation will take place over an extended period of time as the market allows. Union Park District Council agrees with the main themes in the Snelling station area plan: 1) encouraging transit-oriented mixed-use development in the shopping center area; 2) replacing most of the surface parking with parking ramps and underground parking; 3) providing more green spaces and public gathering places with public art as an integral part of the future beautification of the LRT station and surrounding area; and 4) preserving the integrity of the Union Park and Hamline-Midway residential neighborhoods to the north and south of the shopping center. Ms. Heiland asked that the recently-adopted zoning overlay district be extended to the Victoria, Hamline and Western station areas. The Union Park District Council urges the Planning Commission to adopt the plan.
- 2. Ms. Anne White, 1731 Portland Avenue, Saint Paul, MN. Ms. White fully supports the Snelling and Fairview plans being considered today and she urges the adoption of them. She believes the end product represents a good consensus on the best goals and standards for future development around the light rail stations. Ms. White feels that additional non-signalized crossings should be placed at intersections at the Snelling and Fairview station platforms. This is primarily a safety issue. If pedestrian crossings are not provided at frequent intervals, people will be far more likely to jaywalk rather than walking a block or more to a crossing. This puts pedestrians at great risk as they attempt to cross traffic and rail lines with no central islands or protected crosswalks. Further, for people in wheelchairs, mothers with young children, or school groups, walking some distance to safely cross the street or to gain access to a station platform would be a severe hardship. Ms. White recommends that pedestrian crossings bee mandated at all non-signalized intersections, and additional crossings be added at selected locations that serve a preponderance of people with limited mobility.

To meet this she recommends three specific changes in the Introduction and in the Fairview plan and the Snelling plans: 1) mandating non-signalized crossings at all intersections that do not have signals, which would result in pedestrian crossing at 1/8 mile intervals. These crossings should be located at all intersections closed to north-south automobiles (i.e. restricted to right-in, right-out turns) to provide a safe pedestrian crossing, 2) the addition of the following language under The Designated Crossings on page 40: "an additional non-signalized pedestrian crossing should be added at the entrance to Episcopal Homes to provide safe, easy platform access for this large group of people with limited mobility."; and 3) adding a sentence under Non-Signalized Crossings on page 40 to read: "An additional non-signalized pedestrian crossing is needed at Asbury Street to provide direct access to the eastbound station platform for passengers coming from the Transit Plaza or from the residential neighborhood to the north." Ms. White hopes the Planning Commission will amend the University Avenue Zoning Overlay District to provide the same zoning standards for the quarter-mile circles around the Western, Victoria and Hamline as apply to other station areas along the Central Corridor.

3. Eric Galatz, representing the owners of the Midway Shopping Center, stated that they are in support of the plan. Their two concerns are: 1) the degree for which the plans might be construed to be prescriptive; and 2) having a specific picture of what buildings might look like, what greenways might look like in the plan may create the impression that there is a specific direction in how things are going to develop. The plans are meant to be guidelines or suggestions. The plans also suggest shifting the burden for public improvements to private developers. Mr. Galatz said that they appreciate the planning that has gone into this, and hope that this will be brought forward in the spirit of a set of guidelines.

### The following people spoke on the **Fairview** Station:

- 1. Ahvo Taipale, 1841 University Avenue, Saint Paul, MN. He owns a specialty shop and is concerned about losing all the on-street parking, because the station is going to be right in front of his business (Finn/Sisu). Mr. Taipale is concerned that nothing will be done about the parking situation for small businesses. He is not sure if he should stay or move because of this problem. He asked how the City or Met Council is planning to mitigate this loss of on-street parking.
  - Chair Alton said that Mr. Taipale's business is important to the community and the parking issue is something that is being taken into account.
- 2. Theresa Heiland, representing Union Park Council/District 13, 1570 Concordia Avenue. Ms. Heiland said that the UPDC concurs with the main themes proposed in the Fairview station area plan, especially: 1) widening the sidewalks and adding new parks and green space along this section of University Avenue; 2) maintaining a low profile (3-4 stories) for infill development along the south side of University Avenue; and 3) improving access from south of the I-94 freeway to the Fairview station for pedestrians, bicyclists and bus riders. The UPDC also encourages the visioning process for the Western, Victoria and Hamline stations, and inclusion of these station areas as part of the zoning overlay district.

The following people spoke on the **Raymond** Station:

- 1. Karri Plowman, 401 N. Robert Street, Saint Paul, MN. Mr. Plowman represents the Central Corridor Partnership, a coalition of the Minneapolis, Midway, and Saint Paul Chambers. Their sole purpose is to see Central Corridor built on time and on budget. The Partnership supports the overall Central Corridor alignment and respects the planning that has gone into the Central Corridor Development Strategy. They have some comments regarding station area plans and the issue of parking. The loss of on-street parking is due to five things: three (instead of two)-car stations; the provision of left turn lanes at key intersections; adding a second pedestrian crosswalk entrance to stations; adding unsignalized pedestrian walkways, and adding the above-ground infrastructure for three additional stations. However, along University Avenue, on-street parking is still a concern. With mitigation funding scarce in the overall project funded, additional hurtles that limit short-term solutions will be an on-going problem for the business community. The station area plans establish limits on surface parking lots along the Avenue and discourage the expansion of existing surface parking lots; these recommendations will be detrimental to Avenue businesses.
- 2. William Norton, President of Viking Industrial Center, 710 Raymond Avenue, Saint Paul, MN. Mr. Norton wanted to make the City aware that the location shown for Myrtle Hinge Park currently has a building on it that might be available either for residential development or small office space.

The following people spoke on the **Westgate** Station:

1. Susan Kimberly, Vice President for Economic Development, representing the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce. The Saint Paul Chamber, Midway and Minneapolis Chambers have been leading advocates for bringing Light Rail Transit (LRT) to the Central Corridor. Ms. Kimberly wishes to voice their support for the station area plans being considered today. They do not agree with every word on every page nor do they endorse every proposed sketch or concept contained in them. They do strongly support the general thrust of the plans - to open the door to genuine urban densities at appropriate points along the Corridor. The goal is to support economic development and overall corridor prosperity that results in new housing at all income levels, more and better jobs, and more business activity. It is essential to remember that neither the plan nor the model is meant to prescribe the future use of any privately-owned property, and that future redevelopment will be the result of many individual investment decisions made over an extended period of time.

Ms. Kimberly said that it may be necessary to revisit some of the provisions of these plans along with the zoning overlay that was adopted last year in order to deal with events as they unfold during the remainder of the LRT planning process, construction and implementation. Parking remains an issue; the Chamber will continue to work with City staff and others to address it and any others that arise. The Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce remains committed to the success of this project. They look forward to the day when light rail runs down a revitalized, urban University Avenue.

<u>MOTION</u>: Commissioner Wencl moved to leave the public hearing open and continue it at the Commission's meeting in two weeks. Chair Alton adjourned today's public hearing.

### **Zoning Committee**

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

#08-072-938 James Carlson – Rezoning from I1 Industrial to TN2 Traditional Neighborhood. 2000 Benson Avenue between Homer and Glen Terrace. (Merritt Clapp-Smith, 651-266-6547)

<u>MOTION</u>: Commissioner Morton moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the rezoning. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

#08-090-539 Sherwin Williams – To consider an appeal of a decision by City staff to approve the site plan for a new 4,500 square foot retail building for Sherwin Williams Paint. 80 Snelling Avenue South at Lincoln. (/Tom Beach, 651/266-9086)

<u>MOTION</u>: Commissioner Morton moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to deny the appeal and approve the site plan subject to additional conditions. The motion carried on a 17-0 vote with 1 abstention (Margulies).

#08-072-743 Port Authority – Site Plan review for improvements to prepare the property for future use by Upper River. Improvements include dredging, installation of sheet piles on the north side of the barge channel, grading, bringing sewer and water to the site, and installing a storm water treatment system. 637 Barge Channel Road. (*Tom Beach*, 651/266-9086)

Correspondence was received from Tom Dimond and the Saint Paul Port Authority.

Tom Beach, DSI staff, gave a brief overview of this site plan. Mr. Beach said the site is along the north side of the Barge Channel. The area south of the channel has been filled in and is used as industry. The area north of the Barge Channel was not filled in until the 1990's, when some of it was leased to the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers by the Saint Paul Port Authority for deposition of dredge materials. The Port Authority has now applied for site plan review for improvements to prepare a portion of the property for future use by Upper River Services. Staff found that the filling in the former wetland has been done in accordance with an agreement between the Corps of Engineers and the state Department of Natural Resources. The City does not have jurisdiction over this activity. Mr. Beach further stated that the proposed improvements meet all applicable City standards. He noted that a separate site plan review will be required for Phase Two improvements, including new buildings, a parking lot, storage tanks, and equipment.

Commissioner Gordon asked who were the parties to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Mr. Beach explained that it was between the Corps and the DNR, and that they would normally regulate within this area.

Commissioner Gordon referred to Tom Dimond's letter, the second paragraph, which states: In 1998 the grading and fill was done without permits from the City of Saint Paul and no site plan review or hearings or approvals were held by the Planning Commission or City Council.

Mr. Beach said that these activities did not require permits or approvals by City. The MOU agreement basically said the Army Corps could bring materials into a limited area.

Commissioner Lu expressed concerns about the second phase of construction and the wetland mitigation being required.

Mr. Beach said that the first phase is site work, and second phase will be construction of buildings and facilities for Upper River Services. All the work will be within the 18 acres where fill is permitted by the MOU.

<u>MOTION</u>: Commissioner Lu moved to lay the application over indefinitely until the Planning Commission receives more information. Seconded by Commissioner Smitten.

Commissioner Smitten stated she also has questions about the wetlands and the second phase.

Commissioner Wencl noted that the members' packets for today contained only the Zoning Committee's resolutions, but did not have the full staff reports that are normally part of the packet. Commissioners may not have as much background information as they need.

After further discussion, Commissioner Ward called the question.

The chair clarified that the vote would be on the motion to lay over indefinitely until there is information with respect to the second phase and the DNR wetland mitigation.

The motion failed on a voice vote, with 3 abstentions (Kramer, Spaulding, Margulies).

Commissioner Gordon asked about the impact of a two week lay over on the project going forward.

With the consent of the Commission, Vice Chair Donnelly-Cohen, who chaired the meeting for this item, invited Lorrie Louder, Director of Development with the Saint Paul Port Authority, to respond to Mr. Gordon. Ms. Louder said that the Port Authority believes it has satisfied all of the questions that have come up and would like to proceed with this project as soon as possible. They would be happy work with the Commission and staff to provide answers to any additional questions.

<u>MOTION</u>: Commissioner Smitten moved to delay the Planning Commission's decision for two weeks, to receive additional information and review it.. Commissioner Wencl seconded the motion. The motion failed on a vote of 6-7 (Alton, Barrera, Bellus, Donnelly-Cohen, Faricy, Johnson, Morton) with 3 abstentions (Kramer, Margulies, Spaulding).

<u>MAIN MOTION</u>: Commissioner Morton moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the site plan subject to additional conditions. The motion carried on a vote of 8-5 (Barrera, Lu, Nelson, Smitten, Wencl) with 3 abstentions (Kramer, Margulies, Spaulding).

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

#08-088-058 Mississippi Market – Variances of TN3 standards for FAR, building height, parking maximum and location, and design. West 7<sup>th</sup> Street between Perlman and Thurston. (*Lucy Thompson*, 651/266-6578)

Commissioner Nelson distributed a handout with proposed amendments to the draft resolution. His main concern has always been urban design, not the store itself, i.e., the way the design impacts the TN3 zone and the adjacent existing housing developments and future housing developments.

<u>MOTION</u>: Commissioner Nelson made a motion to amend the permitted maximum number of parking space to 40 (instead of 55), with the condition that substantial landscape buffering be provided to protect adjacent current and future multi-story housing in the TN3 zoning district. Seconded by Commissioner Ward.

Commissioner Spaulding asked how critical is it for the store to have this extra parking. Lucy Thompson said that she presumes the 47-59 spaces applied for by Mississippi Market is what they feel they need to have a viable business.

Commissioner Kramer said that they spent an extensive amount of time at the Zoning Committee discussing the parking issue. The Committee's recommendation was based on several factors, including the site's location on W. 7th, truck access to the site, the proposed expansion location, parking turnover, delivery truck size and employee parking demand. The Zoning Committee tried to take into account all of the traffic that would be on the site and what would be generated by the future expansion.

The motion failed on a roll call vote of 2-11 (Barrera, Donnelly-Cohen, Faricy, Gordon, Johnson, Kramer, Lu, Margulies, Morton, Spaulding, Wencl) with 2 abstentions(Alton, Smitten).

<u>MOTION</u>: Commissioner Nelson moved to amend the motion to require the site plan to come back before the Planning Commission for final approval.

Commissioner Nelson said he feels that several aspects of the conceptual site plan do not meet the requirements of Sec. 66.343, Traditional Neighborhood District Design Standards. **The motion died for lack of a second.** 

<u>MAIN MOTION</u>: Commissioner Morton moved to restate the June 19, 2008, Zoning Committee's approval of all variances with conditions. The motion carried on a vote of 12-1 (Nelson) with 2 abstentions (Alton, Smitten).

# V. Comprehensive Planning Committee

<u>Parks and Recreation Chapter</u>: Release draft for public review and set public hearing on September 19, 2008. (*Jessica Rosenfeld*, 651/266-6560)

Commissioner Donnelly-Cohen said the committee reviewed the Parks and Recreation chapter at its last meeting, but this item was omitted from the Commission's published agenda for today's

meeting through a staff oversight.

<u>MOTION</u>: Commissioner Donnelly-Cohen moved the Comprehensive Planning Committee's recommendation to release the draft for public review and set a public hearing for September 19, 2008. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

### VI. Neighborhood Planning Committee

<u>Schmidt Brewery Project Area Redevelopment Plan</u> – Adopt resolution finding plan to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. (*Jessica Rosenfeld*, 651/266-6560)

<u>MOTION</u>: Commissioner Wencl moved the Neighborhood Planning Committee's recommendation to adopt the resolution finding the plan is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The motion carried on a vote of 13-0 with 2 abstentions (Alton, Smitten).

Central Corridor Zoning Overlay: Defining Western, Victoria, and Hamline as Station Areas: - Release daft for public review and set public hearing on August 22, 2008. (Donna Drummond, 651/266-6556)

<u>MOTION</u>: Commissioner Wencl moved to recommend release of the draft for public review and set a public hearing on August 22, 2008. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

### VII. Communications Committee

No report

### VIII. Task Force Reports

None

### IX. Old Business

None

# X. New Business

None

### XI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:29 a.m.

Recorded and prepared by Sonja Butler, Planning Commission Secretary Planning and Economic Development Department, City of Saint Paul

Respectfully submitted,	Approved
	(Date)
Larry Soderholm, AICP	Marilyn Porter
Planning Administrator	Secretary of the Planning Commission

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